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Sustainable development and international economic cooperation: integration of the economies in transition into the world economy

Integration of the economies in transition into the world economy

Report of the Secretary-General

Addendum

II. Activities of the organizations of the United Nations system

International Labour Organization (ILO)

1. Industrial relations systems in most of the economies in transition are still in the initial stages of development, and social protection systems need reforming to restore their financial sustainability. Awareness has increased throughout the region of the need for a better balance between economic and social development and of the important role of social dialogue in developing consensus in support of reform measures.

2. Much of the work of the International Labour Organization (ILO) in the economies in transition during the biennium has drawn upon the results of the Fifth European Regional Conference (Warsaw, 1995) and has focused on tripartism, employment promotion, social security reform and the strengthening of employers' and workers' organizations. Particular emphasis was placed on the development of labour legislation through the ratification and implementation of international labour standards, especially the ILO conventions. Important steps were taken by a number of these countries, with ILO support, to set up institutions of social dialogue. ILO also contributed to reinforcing the peace process in Bosnia and Herzegovina through technical cooperation activities designed to bring together members of the different communities.

3. Almost all the economies in transition held national tripartite seminars based on ILO standards and on the experience of other economies in transition and Western Europe. Some of the seminars focused on the role of tripartite bodies for economic and social consultation,

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collective bargaining practices and legislative arrangements, procedures for the settlement of labour disputes and the role of labour courts. A seminar in Ukraine, organized with the International Monetary Fund, examined problems of wage policy, including wage arrears.

4. ILO technical cooperation activities have led to the strengthening of participation by social partners in the design and implementation of local restructuring policies for employment preservation and the creation of new jobs at the local level. Advisory services covered topics ranging from labour migration policies and protecting the rights of migrant workers to the development of labour statistics systems. Projects on entrepreneurship, vocational training and retraining were launched in several countries.

5. To strengthen employers' and workers' organizations, advisory services were provided to employers' organizations, and training seminars were organized in all the economies in transition in order to strengthen their internal management and structures, to develop their capacities for collective bargaining and to enable employers' representatives to fulfil their role in the various tripartite bodies. Numerous training seminars and workshops for workers' organizations focused on workers' education, collective bargaining, the implications of privatization, women workers' rights, occupational safety and health, and trade union journalism. Special surveys were prepared on workers' education and collective bargaining experiences as guidance materials for trade unions in the region.

6. Macroeconomic guidance was provided in a country employment policy review carried out in Hungary. A tripartite conference in the Russian Federation endorsed wide-ranging policy recommendations on employment-intensive growth, industrial and regional policies, the promotion of small enterprises, education reforms, special measures for disadvantaged groups and the reform of social protection. A similar conference in Ukraine will be a starting point for a country employment policy review to be finalized during 1998.

7. A regional tripartite seminar was organized on gender issues and equality, covering ILO standards, the labour market, action by trade unions, policies for entrepreneurship, and ILO action to follow up the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, 4–15 September 1995). Guidelines and recommendations were developed and published on promoting the employment of ethnic minorities in Central and Eastern Europe. A regional tripartite consultation was organized to formulate an ILO approach to the reform and development of pension systems in Central and Eastern Europe. A subregional tripartite seminar was held in Azerbaijan on national legislation and international labour standards for countries members of the Commonwealth of Independent States.

8. At the request of the Governments of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, ILO was involved in social policy reviews, in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme. These were the first attempts in the subregion to provide a systemic and critical review of macroeconomic and social policies and to propose a coherent policy framework that combines the objectives of social policy as an integral component of macroeconomic reform.